

# CHECKLISTS OF THE VASCULAR PLANTS OF THE DELTAIC ISLANDS OF THE PEEL-HARVEY ESTUARY

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## ABSTRACT

The vascular flora of the ten named deltaic islands and three islets of the Murray and Serpentine Rivers and the two estuarine deltaic islands and one islet of the Peel Estuary was documented. A total of 322 vascular plant species were recorded, of which 116 were naturalized aliens (weeds). One species of Declared Rare Flora and three Priority Flora have been recorded from the islands.

## INTRODUCTION

There are more than 2,565 marine or estuarine islands, islets and rocks in Western Australia. Most southern Western Australian estuaries contain a series of small to medium sized islands and the Peel-Harvey Estuary is no exception. However, as Seddon (1972) noted, only the Canning, Harvey and the Murray and Serpentine Rivers have a well developed series of deltaic islands present in their mouths as they empty into an estuary. The Peel-Harvey Estuary is further distinguished by having riverine deltaic and estuarine deltaic islands. The riverine high sandy deltaic islands of the deltas of the Murray and Serpentine Rivers are

a unique feature of the Peel Estuary and the Mandurah region. Most other riverine deltaic islands (viz: those of the Canning, Harvey and Preston Rivers) are low lying, often inundated at high tide and dominated by samphire shrublands and sedgelands.

Despite their unique features only the flora of Culeenup Island, a long term study site of the Western Australian Naturalists' Club, has been previously documented (Hussey *et al.* 1992). Currently the Department of Planning and Infrastructure is undertaking studies on access and status of the Deltaic Islands (Peel Development Commission 2007) and this is a contribution to these deliberations.

## SURVEY METHODS

Extensive foot transects of all the islands were undertaken by the authors between 1997 and 2000. Specimens of a range of flora were collected and vouchers lodged in the WA Herbarium. Plant Names follow those officially recognized at the WA Herbarium.

## RESULTS

### Background

Twelve named islands are found in the Peel Estuary (Figure 1) and four very small un-named islets, here named informally for their adjacent island, but not mapped. These are located as follows

- estuarine deltaic islands at the mouth of the Peel Estuary: Creery and Channel Islands and South Channel Islet (located between Channel and Creery Islands);
- Serpentine River deltaic island: Jennala Island; and
- Murray River deltaic islands: Culeenup, Meeyip, Ballee, Jeergarnyeejip, Worallgarook, Yunderup, Little Yunderup, Boodalan and Goongoolup Islands and West Yunderup Islet (tip of Yunderup Island – 32° 35' 23" S 115° 45' 40" E), South-West Woorallgarook Islet (between Worallgarook and Yunderup – 32° 35' 22" S 115° 45' 40" E) and North-West Worallgarook Islet (between Worallgarook and Ballee – 32° 35' 03" S 115° 45' 49" E).

Parts or all of all of the islands

and islets are listed as National Parks or Nature Reserves, however, only 3 Boodalan, Creery and Channel Islands are formally gazetted as nature reserves, chiefly because the first two have supported breeding colonies of Australian pelicans. The other islands are unvested. Most are proposed to be included in the Peel Regional Park (Western Australian Planning Commission 1996).

### Geomorphic Setting and Vegetation

Semeniuk *et al.* (1990) have summarized the geomorphology and climate of the Peel-Harvey estuary. All the islands are located on the alluvial deposits (Pinjarra Plain) of the Murray and Serpentine Rivers, usually with Aeolian deposited Spearwood dunes above these deposits.

All the islands are low lying but most have an area of wind and water deposited sands that overly the alluvial clays of the riverine deposits. The upland sands are covered in a *Jacksonia sternbergiana*/*Kunzea glabrescens*/*Jacksonia furcellata* tall shrubland over perennial veldt grass, probably the result of past grazing and fire (Richards 1980). Semeniuk *et al.* (2000) also recorded a similar vegetation type on Barr Island, a deltaic island in the mouth of the Collie River and note it is sporadically present along the adjacent shoreline at Pelican Point and on the Preston River Delta. In both areas, however, both the authors and

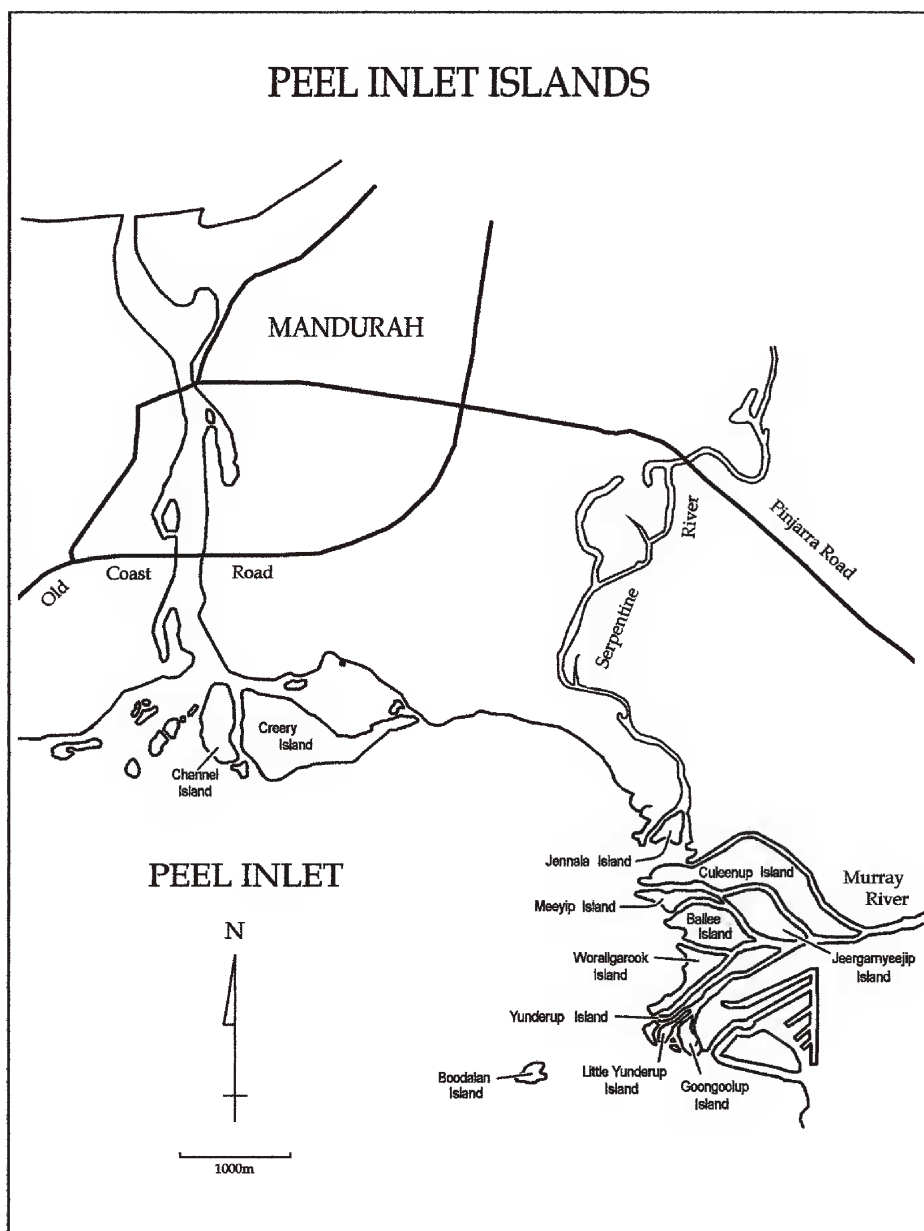


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the twelve named islands and the four unnamed islets in the Peel-Harvey Estuary.

Semeniuk *et al.* (2000) note that the common vegetation on the sandy soils of the adjacent mainland are woodlands of *Banksia*, *Tuart*, *Marri* and *Jarra*, which are not present on these islands.

Around these sands are a complex of fresh, sub-saline and saline wetlands, dominated either by woodlands of *Melaleuca raphiophylla* or *Melaleuca cuticularis*, shrublands of *Melaleuca viminalis*/ *M. incana* or *Melaleuca osullivanii*, succulent low shrublands of *Tecticornia* species, grasslands of *Sporobolus virginicus* or bare mud with an aquatic herbfield of *Ruppia maritima*. Fringing all islands around high water mark are woodlands of *Casuarina obesa* and/ or *Melaleuca cuticularis*. Fresh or brackish seepage areas have dense sedgeland of *Bolboschoenus*. These communities are the result of the fluctuating salinity levels of the rivers and the estuary. These vegetation types are present fringing many estuaries in southern Western Australia, e.g., Leschenault Estuary (Penn *et al.* 2000).

Estuarine islands are not exposed to the direct effects of salt spray, nor are they as isolated from adjacent vegetation as are offshore islands. Therefore, the upland and wetland vegetation of these islands is similar in structure to the adjacent mainland. However, it is normally simpler in composition of the major structural layers and perhaps, therefore, lower in

species richness, although this has not been quantified.

## Flora

A total of 322 species of vascular plants were recorded from the 12 islands and four islets surveyed (Tables 1 and 2). This is a substantial subset of the known flora of the Peel Harvey Estuary System, where 726 vascular plants species (including 161 weeds) have been recorded (Keighery *et al.* 2006).

- The islands vary greatly in species richness; estuarine deltaic islands: Creery (70 species) and Channel Island (97 species) and South Channel Islet (17);
- Serpentine River deltaic island: Jennala Island (92 species);
- Murray River deltaic islands: Culeenup (269), Meeyip (111), Ballee (126), Jeergarnyeejip (212), Woorallgarook (70), Yunderup (87), Little Yunderup (74), Boodalan (22) and Goongoolup Islands (66) and South Yunderup (16), SW Woorallgarook (17) and SW Woorallgarook Islets (25).

These differences relate to size of the islands, habitat diversity, and location in the estuary and survey effort. The estuarine deltaic islands are reduced in species diversity compared to the larger riverine islands. The extensively surveyed and large Culeenup Island with 269 species probably is comparable only to Jeergarnyeejip Island in terms of

diversity and could be considered to have between 95–100% of its flora recorded. We estimate that the other islands range between 75–80% of their total flora recorded. All the islands are richer than marine offshore islands of comparable size.

Because of past disturbance and settlement (Richards 1980) there are many weeds recorded for the islands, 116 in total, a large number such as *Lantana*, *Jonquils* and *Arum Lilies* the result of garden escapes. The most serious weeds recorded were:

- Fresh wetlands *Arum lilies* (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*), *Gladiolus undulatus*,
- Sandy uplands Perennial Veldt Grass (*Ehrharta calycina*), Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*), Black Flag (*Ferraria crispa*), *Freesia* hybrid, One Leaved Cape Tulip (*Moraea flaccida*), Hottentot Fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*), Victorian Tea Tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*) and *Lantana camara*,
- Fringing vegetation *Watsonia* (*Watsonia meriana*), (Spiny Rush) *Juncus acutus*, Buffalo Grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*) and *Kikuyu* (*Pennisetum clandestinum*).

The declared rare orchid (King Spider Orchid, *Caladenia huegelii*) has been recorded from Culeenup Island.

The priority 2 (Atkins 2008) *Grevillea manglesii* subspecies *ornithopoda*, was recorded from Meeyip Island. Populations of the priority 3 species *Dillwynia*

*dillwynioides* were recorded from Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Islands. Populations of the priority 4 species *Antotium junciforme* were recorded from Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Islands

A feature of the flora of the larger riverine deltaic islands is the large number of fresh water herbs from clay based wetlands recorded (eg: *Arthropodium preissii*, *Centrolepis glabra*, *Angianthus drummondii*, *Tribonanthes australis* and *Stylidium utricularioides*). These species are a feature of the Pinjarra Plain and reflect the alluvial soils that help form these islands (Semeniuk *et al.* 1990). These species may be a unique feature of these islands.

Several species that are only rarely recorded on the Swan Coastal Plain, normally along rivers, were located during the survey, namely *Dodonaea viscosa* subspecies *spatulata* (only record for the Swan Coastal Plain) and *Grevillea manglesii* subspecies *ornithopoda*.

## DISCUSSION

Because few estuarine islands have been surveyed for flora it is difficult to make comparisons with other estuarine systems. However, the flora of the Peel Deltaic islands, although subject to past (and continuing) disturbance is still largely intact and diverse with high conservation values. The islands also possess unusual plant communities and their associated species that deserve protection and further study.

The Peel-Yalgorup wetlands are recognized internationally as a Ramsar wetland (Ramsar, 1990) because of their water bird assemblages. The naturally vegetated deltaic islands of this system contribute significantly to the values of this wetland system providing bird feeding, roosting and nesting sites. They also provide vegetated ecological linkages to the Serpentine and Murray rivers and to the south and east for plant and animal movements (Keighery *et al.* 2006).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Table 1. Flora of the Yunderup Delta Islands and Creery Island Nature Reserve

	Ba	Ballee Island	Cu	Culeenup Island	Ba	Boo	Ch	Cr	Cu	Go	Jee	Jen	LY	Mee	Wor	Yun
	Boo	Boodalan Island	Go	Goongoolup Island			LY	Meeyip Island								
	Ch	Channel Island	Jee	Jeegarnyeep Island			Wor	Worallgarook Island								
	Cr	Creery Island	Jen	Jennala Island			Yun	Yunderup Island								
FAMILY		GENUS	SPECIES													
<b>Ferns/Gymnosperms</b>																
Ophioglossaceae		Ophioglossum	lusitanicum	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zamiaceae		Macrozamia	riedlei	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cupressaceae		Actinostrobus	pyramidalis	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Monocotyledons</b>																
Amaryllidaceae		*Amaryllis	belladonna					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		*Narcissus	tazetta					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Anthericaceae		Arthropodium	capillipes	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Arthropodium	preissii				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Caesia	micrantha	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Chamaecilla	corymbosa					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Corynotheca	micrantha	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Sowerbaea	laxiflora	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Thysanotus	manglesianus	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Tricoryne	elatior					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Araceae		*Zantedeschia	aethiopica					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Asparagaceae		*Asparagus	asparagoides					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Asphodelaceae		Bulbine	semibarbata	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Boryaceae		Borya	scirpoidea					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Centrolepidaceae		Aphelia	cyperoides	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Centrolepis	aristata	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Centrolepis	drummondiana	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Centrolepis	glabra					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 1 (cont.)

FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES	Ba	Boo	Ch	Cr	Cu	Go	Jee	Jen	LY	Mee	Wor	Yun
Colchicaceae Commelinaceae Cyperaceae	Centrolepis	polygyna	X			X			X	X		X		
	Burchardia	multiflora					X							
	Cartonema	philydroides			X		X		X		X	X	X	X
	Baumea	junceae	X					X	X	X				
	Bolboschoenus	caldwellii			X		X		X	X		X		X
	*Cyperus	tenellus	X						X					
	Ficinia	nodosa	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X
	Gahnia	trifida	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Isolepis	cernua							x					
	*Isolepis	marginata	X				X	X	X	X		X		X
	Isolepis	oldfieldiana					X							
	Isolepis	setiformis			X		X		X					
	Lepidosperma	longitudinale	X				X		X		X		X	X
	Lepidosperma	squamatum						X						
	Lepidosperma	tenue					X		X					
Dasypogonaceae Haemodoraceae	Schoenoplectus	validus	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	
	Schoenus	caespititius					X		X					
	Schoenus	odontocarpus					X		X					
	Schoenus	rigens					X		X					
	Schoenus	subfascicularis					X		X					
	Schoenus	variicellae					X							
	Lomandra	suaveolens	X				X		X					
	Anigozanthos	viridis					X		X					
	Conostylis	aculeata	X				X		X		X	X	X	X
	Haemodorum	simplex					X		X					
	Haemodorum	spicatum	X				X		X					
	Tribonanthes	australis					X							
	Tribonanthes	violacea					X		X					
	Halophila	ovalis	X											X
Hydrocharitaceae														



[illegible]

Table 1 (cont.)

FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES	Ba	Boo	Ch	Cr	Cu	Go	Jee	Jen	LY	Mee	Wor	Yun
Philydraceae Phormiaceae Poaceae	Diuris	laxiflora					X		X					
	Diuris	longifolia		X			X							
	Elythranchera	brunonis	X				X		X					
	Elythranchera	emarginata					X		X					
	Microtis	media	X				X		X					
	Microtis	orbicularis			X		X							
	Prasophyllum	macrostachyum					X		X					
	Prasophyllum	ovale					X							
	Pterostylis	?nana					X		X					
	Pterostylis	recurva					X		X					
	Pterostylis	sanguinea	X				X		X					
	Pterostylis	nigricans					X		X					
	Thelymitra	antennifera					X		X					
	Thelymitra	flexuosa					X		X					
	Thelymitra	aff. pauciflora					X		X					
	Thelymitra	pygmaea					X		X					
	Philydrella	revoluta					X		X					
	Dianella	filiformis	X		X		X		X					X
	Lachnagrostis	filiformis	X		X		X		X					
	*Aira	caryophyllea	X		X		X		X					
	Austrodanthonia	setacea	X		X		X		X					
	Austrostipa	campylachne	X				X		X					X
	Austrostipa	compressa	X				X		X					
	Austrostipa	flavescens	X				X		X					
	*Avena	barbata	X		X		X		X				X	
	*Briza	maxima	X		X		X		X				X	
	*Briza	minor	X		X		X		X				X	
	*Bromus	diandrus	X		X		X		X				X	
	*Cortaderia	selloana			X		X						X	
	*Cynodon	dactylon	X	X	X		X						X	X



Table 1 (cont.)

FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES	Ba	Boo	Ch	Cr	Cu	Go	Jee	Jen	LY	Mee	Wor	Yun
Asteraceae	Hydrocotyle	alata	X				X		X					
	Hydrocotyle	diantha					X		X					
	Trachymene	coerulea					X		X					
	Trachymene	pilosa	X				X	X	X		X	X	X	X
	Angianthus	drummondii					X		X					
	Angianthus	preissianus	X		X		X		X					
	*Arctotheca	calendula	X		X		X		X		X	X		X
	*Symphotrichum	subulatum			X		X		X					
	Brachycome	bellidioides		X	X		X		X					
	Brachycome	iberidifolia					X		X	X		X		
	*Conyza	bonariensis					X							X
	*Conyza	sumatrensis	X		X		X		X	X		X		X
	Cotula	coronopifolia	X		X		X	X	X			X		X
	Cotula	cotuloides	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
	*Cotula	turbinata					X							
	*Crepis	vesicaria					X							
	*Ditrichia	graveolens		X			X		X			X	X	
	*Helichrysum	luteo-album					X		X	X	X	X	X	X
	*Hypochoeris	glabra	X				X	X	X	X				
	*Lactuca	saligna			X		X							
	Millotia	myosotidifolia					X		X					X
	Myriocephalus	helichrysoides	X				X		X					
	Olearia	elaeophila					X						X	
	Podolepis	gracilis (pink)					X		X					
	Podotrocha	gnaphalioides					X		X					
	Pogonolepis	stricta	X		X		X		X	X		X		
	Quineta	urvillei	X				X		X					
	Rhodanthe	citrina					X		X					X
	Senecio	pinnatifolius	X		X		X		X			X	X	X



Table 1 (cont.)

FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES	Ba	Boo	Ch	Cr	Cu	Go	Jee	Jen	LY	Mee	Wor	Yun
Crassulaceae	Rhagodia	baccata	X		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
	Sarcocornia	quinqueflora	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Suaeda	australis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Threlkeldia	diffusa			X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
	Crassula	colorata	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Droseraceae	*Crassula	decumbens	X				X					X		
	*Crassula	glomerata	X	X	X	X	X		X					
	*Crassula	natans	X		X	X	X		X			X		
	Drosera	gigantea			X	X	X		X					
	Drosera	glanduligera	X			X	X		X					
	Drosera	menziesii				X	X		X					
	Drosera	porrecta				X	X		X					
Epacridaceae	Brachyloma	preissii												
	Leucopogon	propinquus	X											
	Poranthera	microphylla	X				X		X	X				
Euphorbiaceae	Frankenia	pauciflora			X	X	X		X	X		X	X	
Gentianaceae	*Centaurium	erythraea	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		
	Centaurium	spicatum				X	X		X	X				
	*Cicendia	filiformis				X	X		X	X				
	*Erodium	botrys				X	X							X
Geraniaceae	*Geranium	molle				X	X							X
	Geranium	solanderi							X			X		
	*Pelargonium	x domesticum				X	X							
Goodeniaceae	Anthotium	junciforme				X	X		X					
	Dampiera	trigona				X	X		X					
	Goodenia	pulchella	X			X	X		X				X	
Haloragaceae	Gonocarpus	nodulosus	X			X	X		X					X
	Halorhagis	brownii				X	X							
	Myriophyllum	drummondii				X	X							





Table 1 (cont.)

FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES	Ba	Boo	Ch	Cr	Cu	Go	Jee	Jen	LY	Mee	Wor	Yun
Papilionaceae	*Oxalis	pes-caprae	X		X	X	X				X	X	X	X
	*Oxalis	purpurea					X						X	X
	*Chamaecytisus	palmerensis					X							
	Dillwynia	dillwynioides					X		X					
	Gompholobium	tomentosum					X		X					
	Hardenbergia	comptoniana	X				X		X					
	Jacksonia	fucellata	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Jacksonia	sternbergiana	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
	Kennedia	prostrata					X		X					
	*Lotus	angustissimus	X		X		X		X		X	X		
	*Lotus	suaveolens					X							
	*Lupinus	angustifolius					X							
	*Lupinus	cosentinii			X		X			X				
	*Lupinus	luteus					X							
	*Lupinus	mutabilis					X							
	*Medicago	polymorpha					X							X
	*Melilotus	indica			X		X							
	*Ornithopus	compressus			X		X					X		X
	*Trifolium	campestre					X					X		
	*Trifolium	dubium			X		X					X		X
Polygalaceae	*Trifolium	subterraneum					X							
	*Vicia	sativa			X		X					X		X
	Viminaria	junceae	X		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	
	Comesperma	integerrimum	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			
	*Acetosella	vulgaris					X							X
Polygonaceae	*Rumex	crispus	X	X	X	X	X				X		X	X
	*Rumex	pulcher							X				X	X
	Calandrinia	calypttrata			X			X	X					
	Calandrinia	corrigioloides	X				X	X		X	X			



**Table 2.** Vascular Flora of the un-named Islets

Species	South Channel	West Yunderup	North- West Woorall- garook	South- West Woorall- garook
*Anagallis arvensis			X	X
Apium prostratum	X	X	X	X
Atriplex hypoleuca				
*Atriplex prostrata		X	X	X
Bolboschoenus caldwellii		X		X
*Bromus diandrus		*		
*Cakile maritima	X	X	X	
*Carpobrotus edulis		X		
Casuarina obesa	X	X	X	X
*Chenopodium murale			X	
*Cynodon dactylon			X	X
Eucalyptus rudis				X
Ficinia nodosa	X		X	
Frankenia pauciflora	X	X	X	
Juncus kraussii	X	X	X	X
*Lolium perenne		X	X	X
Melaleuca cuticularis		X		
Melaleuca viminea		X	X	
Myoporum capparoides			X	
*Paspalum vaginatum		X	X	
Rhagodia baccata		X		
*Rhaphanus raphanistrum				X
*Rumex crispus		X	X	
Samolus repens			X	
Sarcocornia quinqueflora	X	X	X	X
*Solanum nigrum		X	X	X
*Sonchus oleraceus		X	X	X
Sporobolus virginicus	X	X	X	
*Stenotaphrum secundatum		X	X	
Suaeda maritima	X	X	X	X
*Symphotrichum subulatum		X	X	X
Tecticornia indica		X		
Tecticornia halocnemoides	X		X	X
Triglochin striata	X		X	X